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CSM No. 367

15054

Copy No. _____

12 March 1956

CURRENT SUPPORT MEMORANDUM

SOVIET IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DRIVE FOR AUTOMATION

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND REPORTS

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

This report represents the immediate views of the originating intelligence components of the Office of Research and Reports. Comments are solicited.

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE AS SANITIZED
1998

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SOVIET IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DRIVE FOR AUTOMATION

On 22 January 1956 the central Soviet press announced that, by order of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, USSR, the Ministry of Machine and Instrument Building had been divided into an all-union Ministry of Instruments and Means of Automation, and an all-union Ministry of Machine Building. 1/ The new "Minister of Automation" is M. A. Lesechko, a deputy minister of the original ministry and identified as late as September 1953 as director of the Calculating and Analyzing Machine Plant in Moscow. 2/ In view of Lesechko's background, it seems likely that the new ministry will concentrate on general types of precision equipment and instruments which have a wide application in the automation of industrial processes.

Establishment of the new ministry is the most recent step in the current drive for technological improvement. The first step was the formation on 28 May 1955, of a State Committee of the Council of Ministers for New Techniques (Gostekhnika). Under the direction of V. N. Malyshev, 3/ Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and former Minister of Medium Machine Building, it has the function to promote automation.

The second step was a directive, announced by Malyshev in July 1955 establishing the post of deputy minister for new technology in each economic ministry. 4/ Thus a pattern has been developed with a central agency for the promotion of the automation policy at the top, officials with specific responsibility for its implementation at the ministerial level, and now a special ministry to provide goods required to carry the policy through.

A State Committee for Introduction of Advanced Techniques in the National Economy--also called Gostekhnika--had been established as early as 1948 and had existed until February 1951 when its responsibility for inventions and introduction of technological improvements was distributed among the various industrial ministries. 5/ The latter, however, have, again and again, been severely criticized for lack of initiative in this field and in recent years the conviction has been growing that the abolition of the old Gostekhnika had been a mistake. 6/ The new Gostekhnika, thus, was established to expedite technological improvement by functioning as the badly needed central promoter and controller of technological progress in the whole industry. 7/

Accordingly, the new State Committee has broad responsibilities. It is specifically charged with: 8/ (a) elaborating proposals "...on the main directions in the development of science and technique in all branches of the national economy...." (b) drafting the prospectus "...for future work in the creation of new machines, mechanisms, instruments, equipment, materials and physiological processes...." (c) analyzing existing designs and initiating proposals for the "...cessation of production of outdated types of machines and mechanisms...." (d) working out plans for the "...complex mechanization and automation of the most important branches of industry," and (e) developing measures to eliminate technical backwardness in various branches of the economy, as well as to secure the utilization of important inventions and discoveries. The committee also seems to have requisite

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authority to ensure compliance with its policies. A Pravda editorial stated, for example, that it "....has the right to control the activities of ministries and departments in the introduction in the national economy of advanced science, technique, technology, and most important inventions; also to inspect them regarding these problems." 9/ In addition, the committee has the duty, jointly with the USSR Academy of Science and the industrial ministries to collect and disseminate systematically information on developments in domestic and foreign science and technology. 10/

The recently established post of Deputy Minister for New Techniques within each ministry apparently will function as liaison between the State Committee and the respective ministries. As such, the deputy ministers will be expected to accelerate and facilitate technological progress along the lines laid down by the committee.

The new Ministry of Instruments and Means of Automation has the duty to provide material requisites of the technological improvements planned by the State Committee and ministries. Some degree of centralization, obviously, has been considered indispensable to overcome hitherto existing shortcomings. In May 1955, for example, Trapeznikov, director of the Automechanics and Telemechanics Institute, warned that automation development was being hindered by lagging production of general automatic equipment for industry. 11/ He attributed this lag to the fact that more than thirty ministries and agencies were then engaged in producing such equipment, and that production responsibility had not been concentrated in a single ministry. He indicated that the Ministry of Machine and Instrument Building should have taken care of this problem but that it had shown little initiative in this respect.

The establishment of the new ministry, apparently, is the first step toward concentrating the production of instruments and equipment for automation in a single ministry. As yet, it appears to have taken over merely the production of certain types of equipment which formerly came under the responsibility of the Ministry of Machinery and Instrument Building. The Sixth Five Year Plan directives, however, envisage the construction of thirty new instrument producing enterprises for expanding the production base for apparatus for general industrial purposes. 12/ Many, if not all, of the new plants will presumably be placed under the Ministry of Instruments and Means of Automation. The latter may, in time, also take over production of electronic and control equipment now coming under the responsibility of other ministries.

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1. FBIS, USSR Home Service, 23 Jan 56, p cc-3, OFF USE
2. Trud, 21 Aug 55, U
Vechernaya Moscow, #228, 26 Sep 53, U
3. State, Moscow, No. 2130, 31 May 55, U
4. Party Life, No. 12, Jul 55, pp 24-25, U
5. Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. VII, No. 19, p 4, U
6. FDD Summary No. 703, 2 Nov 55, p 62, U
7. Ibid.
8. FBIS, USSR Home Service, 6 Jul 55, pp cc-5-6, OFF USE
9. Ibid, p cc-6
10. FBIS, USSR Home Service, 27 Jul 55, p cc-3, OFF USE
11. Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. VII, No. 19, p 3, U
12. FBIS, USSR Home Service, 17 Jan 56, p cc-16, OFF USE

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